

Prologue: How to be a Castaway

by Daimonshade

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Summary: [This Story is from the POV of an OC, that started off as what I would be on Berk.]Being an pariah among Vikings isn't easy, Hiccup knows this better than anyone, fortunately for him he has a friend this time around. This is a short storythat acts as a prologue to 'How to Train your Dragons', a story of Hiccup and Driftwood, 2 outcasts in a village of Vikings.

1. Terrible Terrors

Saying Astrid wasn't in the best mood today would be an understatement. Her dad had made her join me on my early morning fishing trip and we had been trekking for hours to reach my fishing spot on the other side of the Island.

I enjoyed my hours alone every morning with the waves and the silence, so much so that when I told Astrid's father, he had told Astrid to give it a try. As of yet I had to whether this was going to be good or bad but I was leaning towards the latter. "It's not going to be so bad," I tried to convince Astrid.

"Which part Driftwood, Spending hours waiting for fish or the smell on the way home?"

"We could see some dragons,"

"There hasn't been a dragon attack in weeks, why would they attack two 13 year-old fishing in the middle of nowhere?"

"First of all, Berk is in the middle of nowhere, and I didn't mean attack, I've seen Thunderdrums Scauldrons eating sharks on the shores,"

"Just like you and Hiccup saw that Monstrous Nightmare last week?"

" Come on you saw the trees-"

"-Or the Gronckle the week before?"

"Those rocks _could _have been a Gronckle,"

Astrid just smirked derisively and walked ahead, "Unbelievable,"

The forest we walked in was ancient, but half the trees were less than a century old, the victim of many blazes from wild dragons. We reached the top of the cliffs that surrounded the inlet and I started climbing down.

Astrid stayed at the top and pointed at something at the bottom. "This is the boat you always go on about? This?" She pointed at the small rowboat. I had built it 3 years ago with Hiccup's help. It was 3 metres long and a metre wide, Inside was a bucket and a set of oars. It looked like something Grendel had dragged from the lake bed, but it floated, and that's all that mattered.

"It's tiny!"

I didn't bother to respond to Astrid and set my staff and other things down inside the boat and waited for Astrid to do the same. We rowed to the center of the bay.

The Bay was an circular inlet. It was surrounded by 20 foot cliffs on the shores and a wall of Jagged rocks and whirlpools at the far end, its waters were waist deep for 20 feet before suddenly dropping, I had never seen the bottom. The fish that lived in its waters were born from ancestors that swam here before the whirlpools had cut the bay off from the outside world. There was a river flowing out from the rock on the other side from where Astrid and I had entered, it emerged from the cracks of a tunnel that had long ago caved in.

I got out my fishing line and tackle while Astrid looked over the side.

"Wow look at this place, the water's so clear." She reached over and put her hand in. I snatched her hand out of the water and grabbed her while leaned to the other side of the boat.

"What was that for? I just wanted to touch." Next there was a splash as a pair of jaws leapt out of the water and snapped at thin air. The boat rocked for what seemed to be an eternity.

"You're welcome,"

"What in Odin's name was that,"

"That, was a Bay Shark, they can grow 10 feet long. If you look around, you will see a school of them, or is it a pack?" I pondered that question while I watched. Astrid suddenly notice the dozens of fins that were circling our boat several meters away.

"I recommend hand and legs inside the boat at all times.

Astrid watched the shark swim away for a while before getting out her fishing line and tackle. "How can you catch any fish with all the sharks?". She set up the line like a natural. _She practiced last night._ I smiled to myself. _Always the best at everything she

does._

"Sharks aren't the only things in these waters." My response was lost to the silence of the scene

* * *

><p>It was 2 hours before the first bite. We sat in silence at opposite ends of the boat. Astrid never was a conversationalist, especially for someone who came to Berk on a piece of Driftwood. Astrid had fallen asleep; naturally it was her line that caught first.<p>

"Yes, I got this,"

"Are you sure?"

"I told you it's fine, I'm a Viking I can catch 1 fish. However big it is." Suddenly there was a splash something scaly and green flew out of the water on the end of Astrid's Line.

_By Odin one eye, this isn't good. _I grabbed Astrid's dagger from her belt and cut the line.

"Why did you cut the line?" She shoved me and I fell over the side of the boat.

I spluttered to the surface, and grabbed the side of the boat "I didn't know that we were catching Terrible Terrors."

"What are you talking about?" It was only then that she saw the small, carnivorous reptile leisurely swimming around, nibbling some bait and making what can only be described as laughing noises. I splashed it with water causing it to hiss and swim away eyeing me as it continued to swim a distance away.

"It's a dragon, if I had caught it do you have any idea what it would have meant?"

"Not really, " I said as I lifted myself out of now shark-free waters, Terrible Terrors seem to have that effect. As soon as they appeared, all the sharks in the bay would dive as deep as they could go.

"Figures, you weren't born here." Astrid said.

I stayed silent at that. Astrid picked up her axe and looked at the Dragon floating around the edges of the bay.

"It'll be easier to fish now, the sharks hate Terrible Terrors."

Astrid didn't reply and continued to watch the Dragon floating around from a distance. I went back to catching fish, slightly soggy than before. Within minutes the basket I had taken was starting to be filled. I hooked a few eels but threw them back; they weren't useful for cooking.

Astrid also started fishing again, and was having similar success. I started to enjoy myself, daydreaming about my days on Berk.

Astrid hadn't always been like this. Well not as much, when I had first washed up here she had kept an eye for me. I didn't speak Norse then, and was the frequent target of Ruffnut and Tuffnut's pranks, or Snotlout's snide remarks. She had protected me from the worst of it, the exploding helmets and cliff-shoves, but she never looked as anything more than an outsider. Her parents had taken me in, let me sleep in their house, eat their food. But I was still just a guest. It didn't help when I started learning Norse from, and joining Hiccup on his 'blasted trips' as they were infamously known.

She had started giving me fighting lessons around that time. The first weeks always ended with dozens of painful bruises and cuts, whenever I started getting good at the move she taught and I started fighting back, she would up her game and I would have more scars then before. The scrapes and the pain wasn't what hurt the most though.

I could handle the looks the other villagers gave me, that I wasn't one of them, that I didn't belong. But something about Astrid made me hate myself when she looked past me like nothing more than an annoyance

"Stupid reptile,"

I snapped out of my daydream and saw Astrid raise her axe above her head; the Terrible Terror was sitting on the side of the boat, staring at the basket full of fish behind me.

"Don't do it, Astrid" I said slowly. Getting up from my seat.

"It's a Dragon Drift; this is what we do,"

"Trust me, attacking it is not worth what comes next," I reached for my staff.

"Worth what? Honor and recognition? I think I'll take my chances,"

_Bah, vikings and their honor can burn in Hel, _I cursed inwardly as I acted.

Astrid's axe came down on the feeding dragon. I struck Astrid's hands with my staff, deflecting it to the right. While Astrid was reeling I drew my staff behind my shoulders. she kicked in that instant, and I deflected it again. Again and again she tried to kill the small dragon and kept blocking her Axe. At the last second, instead of recovering, Astrid dropped her axe and tackled, jumping over the fish, the dragon still feeding happily.

"We are Vikings, whose side are you on?"

"Yours Astrid. Killing that dragon will be more trouble than it's worth,"

She punched me and pinned me down with her forearms at my throat. Her eyes locked with mine and I almost stopped. Me and Astrid had fought before, when I practiced this would be the point I gave up. Today was different. I hooked me staff under Astrid's leg and twisted, causing her to lose balance and fall to my right.

I pushed her off me, my hand reached for the fish's in the Dragon's mouth. Her foot lashed out and the basket fell with the dragon. Next she picked me up and threw me off the boat, again. The axe was back in her hands when I surfaced and it was aimed at the Terrible Terror. It finally noticed the danger it was in and was about to fly off. It was too late though, the axe came down. I kicked the boat, Astrid stumbled and the axe shifted.

The tail of the Terrible Terror lay in the boat. I watched the injured dragon fly away feebly crying and shrieking. Astrid was rowing towards shore again; she didn't stop to let me back on the boat. I swam a few feet behind; I did not want to be there when the Sharks started surfacing. Astrid was already climbing out by the time I reached shore. By the time I grabbed my staff and strapped it to my back she was already at the top. I climbed these cliffs daily though, it took me half her time to climb. The breaking undergrowth told me that Astrid was running I sprinted to catch up with her, I knew what happened when you attacked a lone Terror, and we only had one chance at getting out of this alive.

It took me an hour to catch up with Astrid. She stopped and turned to face me.

"Don't come near me,"

"Astrid we don't have time for th-" I took a step forward and she hit me the broad side of her axe.

"Shut-up Drift, do you have any idea how much I have protected you since you arrived? The number of times I stopped Snotlout and the twins from messing with you?"

"Astrid listen to me," I massaged my jaw, trying to stop the spinning and scanned the tree around me, and knew I was too late.

"No, you listen, I am done helping an outsider th æ". I threw my staff like a javelin at Astrid. She jumped to the side and the staff whizzed past her and hit the Terrible Terror, causing it to tear back. I picked up the staff and scanned the trees for more Terrors.

Astrid knelt and looked at the unconscious dragon from afar. "What in Thor's name? Why did it attack me?"

"That's what I've been trying to tell you,"

"What that its friend? Was it coming for me?" she said incredulously.

Hisses erupted in the trees like a nest of snakes and the forest were set alight by dozens of fires. I swatted another Terror away.

"Astrid, friends, plural, Terrors can travel in packs of up to two-hundred and you just kicked the hornet's nest when you sliced the tail off of their friend," I grabbed her arm and sprinted in the direction of the village.

"There are too many to fight and the village is at least an hour away Drift," There wasn't fear in her voice, at least none I could detect. Her anger was gone, there wasn't time for any.

"We don't need to reach the village,"

The woods they ran through started to get thinner, as more and more stumps littered their path. They were the only evidence of woodcutting in this part of the forest. Further along there would be fewer and fewer trees and finding a group of Vikings more likely. _If we get that far._

I glanced back and felt my heart jump into my throat, at least small 15 Terrors were hunting us, breathing fire and tearing up the undergrowth. That was the moment I tripped.

"Drift, " Astrid skidded to a halt and hit the first terror into a tree.

"I'm okay, you sho-"

"If you even think about saying go on without me, I will kill you myself," She settled into a defensive stance hitting aside Terrors as they tried to dart around and get to me.

They settled into a circle, giving me just enough time to pull myself up. We settled back to back, the basket fish on the floor behind us.

"Think Thor's watching?" Astrid asked.

"I don't plan on entering Valhalla" I struck the first terror to jump at me with my staff and kicked the second, I could hear Astrid dealing with her own problems. Something green darted to my right.

"Duck!" Astrid shouted and I fell to one knee. Astrid rolled over my back and I heard the sound of metal against scales and saw three tails fly back. A set of jaws launched at my ankles, I grabbed the body and before it could breathe a spark it was tossed away. But six more mouths came from other directions.

"Astrid Jump!" My staff swept under her feet and knocked back 4 terrors. One jumped on my back. Astrid stepped onto my back, punted it then spun and brought the broadside of her axe on the other.

The seconds became minutes as Astrid and I were consumed in a haze of scales and fire. In the blaze Astrid and I fought as more than just two children, we fought together. Whenever a Terror tried to breathe fire at us, its head was clamped or another was kicked into its path. Burns were inevitable though. I was the first, a black mark on my ankle then another on my back. Astrid got a collection of cuts and bruises all over her as she used her fists just as much as her axe. Somewhere along the fight I lost the feeling in my feet. It just meant I could kick them harder.

Somewhere along the way I Astrid started limping but the dragons were slowing down. I was ready to collapse when they finally stopped. Astrid clutched her shoulder and sat beside me. I tried to sit but ended up collapsing when my ankle gave way.

"Are you alright," We said at the same time and laughed.

"I was wrong about you, Drift, I thought you were like Hiccup,"

I grimaced inwardly at her casual dismissal of my closest friend, but smiled at her comment.

"Astrid I'm not a Viking, not like you anyway,"

"We just took down a pack of Terrors, we must be the youngest Vikings ever to do that " what are you looking at?"

I stared at Astrid, noticing the trickle of blood down her forehead and another from her shoulder. "You're bleeding,"

"You don't exactly look like Freyja either"

I let out a laugh at that. That was when it struck, a lone tailless Terror leapt at Astrid. I tossed my hand out to punch it, but my fingers refused to curl, burnt and scarred as they were. Instead they stabbed the jaws of the creature as they snapped shut and a pain worse than the fires of Hel seared through my fingers.

I managed to crack a grin, as I struggled to remove the reptile from my bleeding hand "Terrible Terror, venom twelve,"

Astrid pulled the toothless dragon off my hand "Driftwood, Drift stay with me,"

The strength left my limbs and the sun was swallowed by darkness.

* * *

><p>The starry sky in Berk was like no other. Sometimes I would sneak out with Hiccup, sometimes I went to the bay by myself, As long as there wasn't a raid. Watching the night sky was like a dream, dragon silhouettes racing through the black. I never felt more at peace.<p>

It was those long nights that told me that I wasn't on Berk. The sky was as foreign as the air and waves that crashed next to me. In front of me was a beach that had no end and behind me was a forest. The forest was filled with something. The air tasted burnt and the trees were made of shale, their leaves the skulls of strange creatures. A compulsion filled me to find what was at the center of it all, at the center of this forest of the dead.

As I walked the trees turned to dust and skulls turned to dirt. At the center of the forest stood a tree. It wasn't made of shale and its leaves weren't of bone. But looking at it filled me with fear. It stood its branches piercing the sky, stars and ice caught in its leaves. The roots were as mountains dwarfing the peaks of Berk, hard and scaly.

_This isn't bark. _The root shifted and the earth quaked as it did so.

It was a dragon.

It stared at me through an amber eye as large as a house. Turned towards and its jaws opened revealing the abyss

The howling darkness contained me as I fell once again into nothingness.

* * *

><p>I bolted upright screaming. And then stopped. Astrid and Hiccup stared at me with concerned expressions. I appeared to be in bed, in Elder Gothi's house. The rain howled against the boarded up window and crashes of lightning lit up the small room.<p>

I laughed nervously " Bad dream" Astrid grabbed me in a bear hug.

Astrid whispered to me "Drift you've been asleep for 3 days," She let go of me and looked at me for the first time. Her expression was hard to read, but her eyes weren't. There was sadness, and something else, guilt maybe, but what I noticed most of all was when she looked at me, she wasn't looking at an outsider, her eyes saw her brother.

"Why were you screaming?" Astrid asked,

Before I could answer Hiccup interjected, his voice sounded distraught "Drift there's something you need to know. When the Dragon's attacked you, Gothi did her best to heal you butâ€| "

"It's my leg isn't it?" I pulled off my bed cover, expecting to see some kind of wooden stump. Instead I was met with a bandaged but otherwise perfectly normal leg.

Hiccup continued "It's your hand."

I pulled out my right hand, Only the small nubs of my fingers were left, like the stumps of cut down trees. And they weren't coming back. "I need some time to be alone,"

Drift I designed the prosthetic's, you can use the rudimentary functions of you-

"Stop, Hiccup." I looked at my hand.

Astrid clasped my fingers with her hands.

I tried to grip her hands trying to feel them, their warmth, and their touch. "Thanks Astrid, but I need to be alone for a while," Astrid closed the door behind her and I was once again in darkness. Pondering my dream and waiting for the rain to stop.

2. Two

Two

It was about a 2 weeks after I woke up that I was finally well enough to leave Gothi's care; The wind was cold and sharp just like every day on the Meridian of Misery, standing on a cliff didn't help matters. I stood well away from the edge and looked over Berk for the first time.

I saw Mildew selling his cabbages to Alfin, I watched the Chief as he

organized the last repairs from the raid a week ago and saw as Hoark and Ark carried away the wreckage of the catapult. I didn't know whether to call it home, I felt just as homely sleeping on my rowboat, and my rowboat didn't talk about me in hushed whispers.

"This is the first time you've been here isn't it outsider?" Gothi's voice rasped as she saw me out.

The corner of my lip curled as she said outsider but I held my silence as I watched the village.

"Don't make such a face young'un, you carry a mark of bravery that many Viking thrice your age don't."

"This mark of bravery will mean I may never hold an axe or shield properly,"

"Aye that may be true," Gothi admitted, "But it also means that even though you were not born in this village, no-one will treat you as anything less than a Viking, and that, child, hasn't happened in decades," She smiled as she patted me on the back. The small amount of happiness I felt left me as I felt the stumps on my hand ache, in its place was sadness and maybe a little anger. I sat down and tried calm myself with the view.

"Hey Drift! You're up!" A shout interrupted my thoughts.

I turned to see Hiccup making his way up the cliffside walkway. Hiccup was the hope and heir to the tribe, looking at him though, you couldn't quite tell. He was thin and lanky for a Viking, his auburn hair was straight and sleek, and his chin didn't have close to one hair.

His face was lit up like a fireworm when he saw me "I've finished your prosthetic, it's at the Forge"

I looked at my hand with another twinge of sadness, before shaking it away and waving to Hiccup, suddenly happy to be able to talk to my friend "Okay, I'm coming Hiccup"

Hiccup threw me my metal staff as I ran to catch up with him. "I found this yesterday in the forest,"

"What would I ever do without you Hiccup" I thanked him and strapped it to the holster on my back.

The Berk forge was like a third home to me, after the Hofferson's house, and the bay. Hiccup and I had apprenticed to Gobber. Hiccup had a way with metal that I could never understand, I could just about help and sometimes modify his designs but he had to be the one to come up with them first.

"Alright then how do these feel Drift" Hiccup finished tightening the latch for my new fingers as I sat down on the bench.

"They feel like metal tied together by gears," I said sarcastically.

"Very funny," Hiccup replied, "Didn't think you had it left in

you, "

"Well I learned from the best, " I smiled and started to move my prosthetics. They were the most complex piece of craftsmanship I had seen in my 6 years on Berk; tiny gears connected by lines of metal or leather, they were so thin I couldn't tell, that was a some kind of cross between a harness and a glove for my hand. When I curled my fingers down the wire would tighten and the prosthetic would curl into a fist. When I returned my finger's to their normal position the prosthetics relaxed with it. Hiccup said as soon as he saw my injury he had taken the duty off, Gobber and completely designed them himself.

"Try holding this hammer" Hiccup gestured towards the one on the desk.

I picked up the hammer and watched as it promptly slipped from my grip. Hiccup grabbed it with the other hand, "Aww come on, " He let out a defeated sigh "It looks like I need to adjust some of the gears and wires and maybe-" he started to mumble and walk over to his design room.

"Hiccup," I cut in.

"Yes?"

"It's fine," I flexed the fingers and felt a weight come off my chest, and did my best to suppress the grin that was attempting to cover my face, " I can smith with my other hand," Hiccup looked at me like I was stupid.

"Eventually," I added, slightly offended, "But what I need to know do you have any [magnets]?"

"Magnets?"

"Stones that attract metal?"

"Gobber bought a huge chunk of that from Trader Johann a few years back, "

"I remember now, that was the week no one could sharpen their weapons because they all got stuck on the rock."

"It wa' goin' ta be magni'cent, gian' loads of metal hit'tin' Dragon's left an' righ'" A gruff voice shouted from outside the forge.

"Well that's certainly one way to look at it, Gobber, Another way is half the sheep gets stolen because no one in Berk has a decent sword, " Hiccup said dryly.

Gobber walked into the forge and cuffed him on the back of the head lightly "It was yur' idea in tha' first place," He said, grinning slightly "but it doesn't matta' now, I blew that thin' inta' smitherin's, I gotta' couple of th' blaste' rocks leftover in tha' wooden box, watcha' need'em for?" I smiled at Gobber, he was one of the few islanders who looked at me as more than the boy who floated onto the island. Gobber the Belch was a strange Viking like that, even after all Hiccup's misadventures he never treated him like an

outcast, although he stayed clear of anything Hiccup made.

"I think I know what you want the '[_magnet]'_ for" Hiccup deftly removed my prosthetics and grabbed the rocks from the wooden box and where Gobber had gestured on the shelf.

"So how were tha' new hands'?"

I wiggled what was left of my fingers, "They're alright,"

"But the' don't beat tha' originals righ'?" Gobber finished my sentence for me. " Trust me Driftwood, it'll feel' like that fer' years and years, but wan' dae this'll save ya' life," He gripped the stumps on my fingers and gave me an encouraging nod.

"Whatever you say Gobber," I said, unconvinced by his simple advice, I continued flex my fingers and walked over to where hiccup was modifying my prosthetics. Losing them had surprised me, for a week all I did was lie in bed as my other scars and burns healed and flex my hand, that or try to make sense of my dream, whenever I pictured the dragon though, I couldn't think straight and found myself curling up in my bed.

_What am I so afraid of? _ I shook it off.

"Is this what you had in mind, " Hiccup showed me the prosthetics. He had cut small holes into the fingers, and cut the rocks and placed them each segment of the fingers. He handed it back to me and helped me put it on. I wiggled my fingers, I could move them like I used to,

Hiccup asked " Gobber, could you pass that staff, it's the metal one you're sitting next to,"

Gobber picked it up with his pincers and chucked them over. I reached for it with my hand and smiled when the staff lightly clicked into my hand. A weight I gave the staff an experimental whirl, knocking over several weapon's as I did so, before it promptly flew off my hand.

Hiccup said "Looks like you need practice,"

I picked it up and whirled the staff again and more weapons clattered to the floor.

"Och would ya' practice somewhere, Hiccup brings me enough trouble as it is" Gobber bellowed.

"Yep, sorry Gobber" Hiccup pulled me outside before I could cause any more damage. _

* * *

><p>Drift and I had started walking around the village and had reached the foot of Gothi's cliff when we met Astrid and the others. "Hi Astrid," I greeted.<p>

"Drift, how are you feeling?" Astrid addressed her step-brother.

_Yep completely invisible, as usual. _I thought. Drift gave me an apologetic glance before answering.

"Hey Hiccup, heard you found a Monstrous Nightmare," Snotlout said derisively.

"Wait was that before-"

"-or after the Zippleback?" Ruffnut and Tuffnut laughed. I felt anger cindering in my chest, I let it brush past me like I always did.

"Well as a matt-" I tried to retort, but Astrid had finished speaking with Driftwood and walked off, so Snotlout shoved past me and I fell over. Driftwood moved to help, but Ruffnut and Tuffnut 'fell' over and pushed him over as well.

"Woops," They laughed as they walked away. Fishlegs looked conflicted as he ran to keep up with the others. I gave him my best disappointed glare but he had already turned around by then.

"You would think that Astrid would be moreâ€¦" I started dryly, picking myself up and patting down. Years of this had desensitized me to Snotlout and the twinsâ€¦ _habits_, but seeing Drift receive the same treatment made me feel guilty.

"Protective?" Driftwood offered, he remained lying on the floor, placing his hand behind his head. "She knows that I can handle myself, when it matters," He stated simply, however something about the tone of his voice told me he was happier than usual.

"That's odd,"

"Why's that?"

"Well, it's just that, when you were at Gothi's, every time I came to visit youâ€¦"

"Me? Aww you shouldn't have" he said with a smile on his face.

"Ha. Ha. very funny," I stared at him flatly before continuing "as I was saying, when I came to see you, for measurements for your prosthetics, she was always there sitting next to your bed, even when she was in bad a shape as you were"

Driftwood remained silent, his expression became unreadable. "How was she?"

"Who Astrid? She was injured pretty badly, but she hadn't been poisoned so it was alright. She got to keep all of her fingers,"

I suddenly cringed at my response, Driftwood just jumped to his feet and didn't take notice of my comment, "Well what are we doing today, Hiccup?"

I didn't question the sudden change of topic, 7 years had made me used to his odd habits. "I was hoping we could continue our lessons,"

"I already know how to speak Norse," Driftwood replied, as if

carefully thinking about his response. I had taught him to speak Norse years ago when he had washed up on the Island.

"I was referring to my lessons in English," Driftwood had taught me English. It had been a difficult process to say the least, I had asked to learn English when Driftwood's Norse was shaky at best and it had taken years to fully understand it, but both of us had realized the advantage of knowing a language that none of the other Berkian's knew. Well except for Astrid.

Driftwood thought for a moment before answering, "Only if we practice our fighting today as well,"

"Come on Drift, you beat me even before you learnt to fight from Astrid,"

"Well considering I only have one and a half of a hand, I would say I am at a disadvantage,"

I grumbled before realizing he only asked because he needed to practice with his handicap and quickly agreed. We walked down to the beach together and picked up our practice weapons along the way. I looked at my weapon with disdain as we walked, it was just a cylindrical piece of wood as long as my arm, but years of practicing with Driftwood had taught me to hate and despise everything that it stood for. I swallowed my disdain and gripped it tightly. Driftwood carried a similar rod, as he tried to grip it slipped from his hand.

I caught it, "I should make a metal one of these so you can grip it,"

"If you do that you should get one for yourself too,"

"Well I guess now's better than ever," I tried to turn around back to the forge but with no luck.

"Whoa whoa whoa, not so fast there Hiccup Horrendous Haddock, I can still practice with my left hand, I'll need to eventually anyway,"

I grimaced as he got into position, sparring was never any fun for me, I always seemed to trip or lose my balance. At this point Driftwood (and everyone else on Berk) had given up on teaching me larger weapons, so instead he tried to get me used to a dagger, not that he was much use with a dagger either. I didn't complain however, as it made my sessions easier.

I took a glance around to see if I could use anything to my advantage. The waves washed along the shore a few metres to my left and to my right were the embankments we had walked down. The beach was pristine and I could see our footprints as we had walked to our usual spot. Behind me was the glacier, I giant ice fortress that the people of Berk rarely ventured into.

Driftwood threw his staff into the sand a few metres away and stood opposite me. The corners of his lips curled into a smile, his feet were a shoulder's width apart and his stick in his left hand. I took up the same stance with my stick in my right hand. Driftwood immediately darted forward and smacked wrist. Instantly I dropped the stick and complained, "Oww, I wasn't ready"

"[Like it would have made difference]," Driftwood swapped to English, "[why do you still use your right hand when we spar]," he picked up my stick and threw it back.

"[Because that's the Viking way to fight]" I retorted in fluent English, catching the stick in my right hand.

"[The Viking way is going to get you killed]" Driftwood growled. "[Hiccup put the stick into your left hand],"

I reluctantly swapped hands, it wasn't worth getting into an argument about this, even if Gobber or my Dad would just tell me to use my right hand later. I got into the same stance as before and asked, "[Ready]?"

"[Ready]."

I lunged forward Driftwood sidestepped me and brought his arm down to knock the stick out of my hand. I jumped back and stumbled but quickly balanced myself. I was faster, if a bit less balanced, and outstepped every push Driftwood made. Where I excelled in speed however, Driftwood excelled in experience. He outmanoeuvred me time and again, I used his handicap to my advantage and forced him to swing wildly, his left arm unused to holding a stick.

"[You know you're going to have to do something eventually, not just side-step every problem,]" Driftwood taunted.

"[Is this how you're going to teach me English]?" I snorted as another swipe missed him by a large margin.

"[If you can hold a conversation during when we spar, I'll assume that you're understanding of this language has progressed to the point where lessons are no longer necessary],"

"[Are you using big words on purpose? If that is the case then I should be the first to mention the futility of the approach that you are taking.]" I smiled as I made a half-hearted swing towards Driftwood.

Driftwood lunged forward at that moment, I stopped mid-swing and leaned back but I overbalanced and fell. As I tumbled, I swung out with my hand and the stick connected with Driftwood's left hand and disarmed him. Driftwood dived for his stick. As he did so something hit him in the head and he fell into the sand less than gracefully.

"[I think that constitutes a victory for me,]" I smiled, one hand on my knee while pointing to my stick lying in the sand next to Driftwood.

"[Well let's hope the next person you face is standing 3 feet away and has skin like paper, otherwise this _knife_ might as well as been a stick],"

I ignored that and asked, "[So how's my English] ?" confident in the response I would receive.

"[Hiccup Horrendous Haddock the Third, your English is better than my

Norse and has been for 3 years, I fully intend to never speak English in your presence again,]"

I laughed and stood up. Driftwood was the only person other than Gobber whose company I enjoyed, (_most_ of the time). Driftwood threw my stick back to me and got back into position. "[You didn't think that we were done after one fight]?" He said in response to the confused expression I gave him.

My smile turned into a scowl as I got back into position. We continued spar for hours, and I accumulated a wondrous pattern of scratches and pulled muscles. As we sparred Drift caught up with what happened while he was injured; the previous raid, the catches of fish, rather mundane things if you asked me.

From sparring I knew that neither of us were particularly good, I wasn't that good with dagger (any weapon _really_) and Driftwood was more used to fighting with his staff (and with all of his hands intact, but I think that would be rude to mention). _Why do I keep practice with him_ I wondered, _I mean this won't help me against the dragons._ I fell over when I failed to notice a swing Driftwood made and tripped over clumsily in my haste to dodge. I didn't hesitate as I threw sand at Drift's eye and scrambled for my stick.

Driftwood cursed and dropped his stick. But instead of reaching for it though he kicked the sand at his feet as hard as could. This time I was the one cursing and scrambling around. Drift then tackled me into the ground and in moment I lay with my arm twisted behind my back. Painfully. "[I give up]"

"[Good, now I can get the sand out of my eyes.]" He said angrily, although he didn't actually tell me off for it. We both fumbled to the tide and washed the sand out of our eyes and mouths for a few minutes. Let me tell you now, you do _not_ want to wash your eyes and mouth with sea water.

"[Hiccup]?" Drift spoke in a questioning tone. He looked away from me with an uncertain expression on his face.

"[Yeah]?"

"[What is Niflheim]?"

"Nifleheim?" I stopped, it wasn't unusual for him to lull me into a sense of false security, start thinking about a question then find myself lying face first in the sand, "It's part of the underworld; it's where the outcasts, traitors and exiles go when they die. The ones who die bravely in battle and with honor go to the hallowed halls of Vallhalla, One of the roots of Yggdrasil is planted there and at its base-"

"The great dragon Nidhoggr chews on the bark, waiting for Ragnarok, "

"Yeah, why'd you ask?" Now I was curious, I never told him our legends and I doubted Astrid or Gobber had were the Legend speaking type.

"I had a dream where I saw it," Drift was hesitant to speak.

"Nidhoggr?" Driftwood gave a small nod as I said this. "Why are you telling me this? Shouldn't you have told the elder?"

"What, that I had dream about Viking hell? It might as well as been you telling her you saw a Nightfury,"

"I didn't know you such high hopes in me," I said sarcastically. _He __**has**__ got a point though. _I thought to myself.

"You know what I mean Hiccup,"

"What did it look like?" I started to process this information and dropped my stick. I went through all the legends I could remember, like dusting off old tomes in a library.

"What?"

"What did Nidhoggr look like?"

Driftwood paused before answering, "I don't remember properly, it swallowed me before I could look at it. All I remember was that it's skin was like black bark and it had horns that curved along it's jaw.

"That's a pretty accurate description of our legends, Dreams are often omens sent by the Gods, we should tell my Dad, "

"No," Drift shouted.

"What? Why?"

"We can't tell your Dad,"

"And why is that?"

"He wouldn't believe me,"

"You, a complete stranger to Viking legend just described the legendary Nidhoggr, at least the most sung about parts,"

"Fine, what do you think would happen, Hiccup, if the chief told the village, if the village decided this was a bad omen? That I was bringing misfortune or the wrath of the gods, You think that they'll just let me stay with Astrid and her family? Hiccup you can't tell anyone,"

I was about to shout at Drift, tell him he was being unreasonable and unfair, but then I stopped and I thought about it. _If they saw these as omens my dad would have to tell the village, they would have no reason not to send him away._ I argued with myself, _My father isn't superstitious he wouldn't send a boy to his death over this. Then againâ€¦If the village forces him he won't have a choice. And the villagers have done more for lesser omens._ I remembered how the villagers had almost cast Drift back into the ocean when he had washed up in the storm, his skin a colour never before seen in the Archipelago _It had taken Gothi and my Dad an hour before he was taken inside_.With that thought I knew I only had one choice"I promise,"

Drift gave an audible sigh of relief and turned back to me, "Thanks Hiccup," He went and picked up his staff. "Let's get back its starting to get dark,"

There was an uncomfortable silence as we walked back, I tried to ignore it and watched as the sunset over the horizon. "Well would you look at that,"

Drift turned to look at what I saw, just then there was a flash of green on the horizon as the sun finally set.

"They say that the green flash signals arrival of new souls to the underworld," I said

"To Niflheim?" Drift's face turned into a wry smile.

"To Niflheim" My face mirrored his as we walked back.

* * *

><p>Telling Hiccup about my dream was harder than I thought it would be, and I almost regretted it when he wanted to tell the Chief.<p>

The darkness started to creep at our heels as we saw the houses of Berk over the hill. Sparring with Hiccup was hard. Using my left hand to fight was like, well, using my left hand to fight. I still beat Hiccup though. It wasn't that surprising now, when I first started to spar with Hiccup I thought the son of the chief had some hidden talent, some secret strength. However over the years I was continually reminded how wrong I was.

"Why did you make me do that?" Hiccup moaned as he stretched his soar arms and legs.

"Just be glad that it wasn't Astrid that was sparring with you, she would have left bruises," I started to practice with my staff, spinning it slowly in the practice patterns I had learnt with Astrid.

"And probably a broken arm or two," he said dryly.

I laughed as Hiccup formed a sour expression. Hiccup had unique talent at sarcasm, it was maddening how the rest of the village didn't seem to share in my delight though.

"Drift, why did you tell me about your dream, not Astrid?" Hiccup attempted to casually ask.

I continued to spin my staff, thinking before I answered, "You are my friend Hiccup, and I trust you,"

Hiccup seemed to be caught off-guard by the response, "Yes but Astrid is smart, and strongâ€" "

"And a Viking who always does as she's expected" I interrupted, "Hiccup you are the only person in this village who I can talk to, Astrid is the closest thing I have to family and I trust her with my life, but I don't trust her with my thoughts," I paused for a moment to let that sink in. "Don't let that get to your head, your still

'Hiccup the Useless' and I'm still 'That boy from the storm'. Two fishes out of the water." Hiccup smiled at me

Suddenly there was a screeching noise like a banshee cutting through the air. I froze, all Vikings recognized the noise. Its name brought chills to the great hall, its myth brought silence to even the loudest of celebrations.

"Nightfury! Get down!" Hiccup tackled me, and I crumpled to the ground. A violet explosion blasted the spot we had stood a moment ago. The roar of a hundred dragons filled the sky as a horde descended on Berk, like a fiery shadow.

"Come on we have to go," Hiccup jumped up and started running but skidded to a halt, when he realized I wasn't following. I lay still on the floor, the breath caught in my chest, and a ringing in my ears. I tried to think, to act, but every muscle in my body froze and my heart stopped.

* * *

><p>I cursed the gods when Driftwood stayed frozen, huddled to the frozen ground, I had seen it before, in children who saw their first dragon. They would freeze in place, scared out of their minds by the giant firebreathing monster that was flying towards them. But Driftwood never had this.<p>

"Sorry about this Drift," I kicked him in the back, immediately all his muscles loosened up, before he could curl up again I lifted him up by the shoulder and started walking towards the village as fast as I could.

I passed under a strafing dragon and was pulled aside by someone "Hiccup what happened?" Astrid said as she took Drift's other shoulder.

"Well he-"

"I froze up," Drift spoke, we pulled him between two houses and knelt down. "Sorry Hiccup," There was another screech in their followed by an explosion in the distance. I saw Drift's eyes cloud over.

"What's happening to him?" Astrid asked coolly, she put her hand on his head and looked at me for an explanation.

"He's scared, he hasn't moved since he heard the screech of the Nightfury," I replied frantically, I glanced around and saw Vikings rush past, several of them on fire, though _they don't seem to care, thats always a good sign, right_. There was another dragon roar, closer this time, followed by scraping on the other side of the house we were resting against.

Astrid shouted, "Drift we have got to go now, snap out of it," and then she punched him. I tried to hide my surprise as Drift fumbled and caught the fist. "Help me up," he said shakily.

Astrid lifted him to his feet just as a growl sounded above us. "Aww come on," I said resignedly as the Gronckle roared. I was shoved to the ground as Astrid kicked me out of the way of a fireball, she grabbed Drift and dived in the other direction. The wall crumbled in

a tempest of fire and collapsed, I glanced across to Astrid, she and Drift were up.

"Hiccup, get to the forge, we'll meet you there!" Astrid shouted. I tried to shout back but suddenly I was acutely aware of the attention of a certain firebreathing reptile. I gave a nod in Drift's direction, shoving my feelings inside and started running for my life.

_Every single time. The god's must hate me. _I thought resignedly.

* * *

><p>Astrid didn't bother worrying about Hiccup. She looked at Drift, he stood up with one arm around her shoulder for support and his eyes stuck to the floor, as if afraid of what he would see. Right then Astrid wanted to punch him.<p>

_He fought a horde of Terrors two weeks ago, what happened? _Astrid wondered, she decided punching him may have not been for the best. "Drift, you need to get a grip,"

"Astrid, you get to the others," Driftwood almost fell over but quickly righted himself, "I can get to the forge by myself."

She looked at him flatly, "You can barely look up Drift, What in Hel's name is going on?" Astrid dragged him past the some burning houses and waited as several dragons flew overhead. He looked at her for a moment, in his eyes she saw something. Something cold and afraid. Astrid almost stopped then, the iron will she always showed waivered as she looked into his eyes. "Driftwood, we're going to get to the forge, Gobber will be there,"

Driftwood stood up by himself, shakily with his eyes glued to the floor again but he managed to nod. W_hy is he like this?_ Astrid thought, but she pushed her feelings away and focused, she didn't have time for emotion.

They ran through the village around Gothi's cliff and past the great hall, the houses were on fire, but it was clear to her that the counterattack had started. Catapults fired huge boulders into the air and the screams of downed dragons echoed through the sky, in the distance she could hear the battlecries of Vikings. Astrid let herself a little smile, _We're winning,_ _I might not need to get him to the forge_.

She regretted that statement a moment later, a scream filled the air, not the scream of a Viking, or even the scream of a dragon shot of out of the sky. It brought silence to the battlefield as human and dragon alike suddenly looked to the sky.

"Nightfury" Drift rasped. He pushed away from Astrid and started running. She tried to grab him but suddenly an explosion filled her ears and she was thrown off her feet. The next second and something grabbed her from behind. Immediately she swung her elbow around and it connected with something hard.

"Astrid, what're ya doin here? Why aren't you with tha others?" A gruff voice said. Astrid turned her head and realized she had just elbowed Stoick the Vast in the head. but he didn't seem to notice and

dropped her.

"Chief, Drift just ran off there's something wrong with him he's-"

"I saw him run, I'll worry bout' him, you get with the others and start puttin' out those fires," Stoick pointed me in the direction of Gobber's forge, the opposite direction that Drift had run. She paused for a moment, conflicted about what to do.

"Astrid get a move on!" Stoick shouted as he threw a net over a Zibbleback that had come to examine the survivors.

Astrid ran towards Gobber's Forge. She had never disobeyed an order from the chief, that wasn't the Viking way, not her way. When she got to the forge she stopped for a second and realized what she had done. She punched the wall, hard. She felt a trickle of blood come down her knuckles.

Then she picked up a bucket and joined the others.

* * *

><p>Stoick glanced behind him to make sure Astrid had left. The green Zibbleback cowered under the net, its gases spent. Stoick felt his anger rising, but he quashed it, anger would waste time he could be using. He directed wounded Vikings to the great hall and organized the ones that had just got regrouped. "Man the catapults, I want two Vikings at the North Watchtower to call for new waves and someone to get these weapons sharpened by Gobber, and by Odin's beard has anyone spotted that Nightfury?"<p>

"Aye chief, it just sunk a boat at the harbour, the explosion's set half the docks alight," Spitelout replied as he shot down a Gronckle with a bola.

"That's good, Ark keep an eye in that area, warn the others if it changes location, Spitelout, you take command here. I have a straggler to catch,"

"Leave the boy be Stoick, we have more important problems," Shouted Mildew, hiding behind a broken cart.

"We do not, let children be eaten by dragons Mildew, you would be wise to remember that," Yalfr Hoffersen shot him a venomous glare. It was true that the boy wasn't a Viking, but he had proved his mettle two weeks ago and Astrid's father let no-one forget that. Stoick nodded to him then ran off.

He didn't finish the Zibbleback off, he didn't have time. He motioned for the others to take care of it, picked up a hammer someone had dropped and ran after the Driftwood. _That boy's getting to be as much trouble as Hiccup _Stoick thought grimly, he remembered how at first he thought the boy would take after Astrid, _He had the heart of a Viking, fearless, fast and agile. Even Spitelout was impressed, but then he started following Hiccup_. Stoick sighed, _And then he goes and fights of a mob of Terror's, losing most of his hand_. _We're missing something about that boy_. He ducked behind two houses as a trio of Monstrous Nightmare passed overhead.

Stoick remembered his hopes that some of the boy would rub off on Hiccup where Astrid, Gobber and himself has failed. It had quickly become clear this was not to be, entire catches of fish and yaks disappeared in the blink of an eye as Hiccup and Driftwood appeared. _If anything, the boy has taken after Hiccup._ Stoick felt a warm breath on his back, he turned around, years of fighting making him instinctively swing his hammer. It connected with something soft and scaly. The Monstrous Nightmare gave a roar and set itself alight. Its fiery image like some helspawn creature.

Stoick met the Monstrous Nightmare head on, kicking and pounding its head, always making sure it wasn't facing him. He ignored the flames, using his bracers to avoid burns. The dragon roared and struck like snake, its huge jaws trying to cleave him in two. Stoick side-stepped like he had a hundred times before and brought the hammer down on the dragon's neck. He smiled with a grim satisfaction as the dragon's neck snapped, its bellows suddenly silent and its body burning silently.

He turned around and groaned inwardly, facing him were 3 Nadders they hadn't spotted him yet but there was no way for him to avoid them. Three were too many for most Vikings to fight alone. But Stoick the Vast wasn't most Vikings.

Rather than dive for cover from a blaze of fire, he charged straight into the middle of the three. "Come on! Fight me!" he bellowed challenging each of the dragons as he stood in the centre of them. The shocked dragons took seconds to locate their threat, by that time Stoick bashed one's leg in and scared it off. The next readied its spikes and the second took in a deep breath on opposite sides of Stoick. Quickly muttering a prayer to Thor, he waited until the first Nadder drew back its tail and he dived under the legs of the second.

The spikes tore through soft flesh like grass, and Nadder skin was soft as any other. It screamed as it toppled, its blaze lighting up the sky and setting alight the half-formed explosive cloud of a Zippleback. Stoick pushed it off his legs and threw his hammer as hard as he could at the last.

Nadder's are incredibly fast, they would often take to take to chasing deer by foot, just for the fun. They danced around arrows like they were as slow as moths and were ammo fodder for catapults. They have one weakness, their blindspot. All dragons have one, Stoick knew this. His hammer flew straight towards the its head, right in front of the snout where the bulbous head of the Nadder couldn't see. It hit with a dull thud, that followed by the louder thud of the unconscious dragon falling to the ground bleeding.

Stoick paused only for a second to make sure that he wasn't being watched, then started running, trusting his instincts and the gods to lead him to the boy. He reached the warehouse overlooking the docks and heard an all too familiar sound of a child screaming, he grinded his teeth, "Hiccup" He saw him running among the houses near the pier.

A small fear existed in Stoick that one day he wouldn't be fast enough, one day Hiccup would trip up or have no-where to hide and Hiccup's father wouldn't be there to save him. It was this fear that drove him now. The Nightfury had joined in. Stoick knew that there

was one, his instincts led him to believe so after seeing it for years. Whenever the Nightfury appeared lightning and death always followed.

That's why Stoick ran that night, trusting Gobber and Spitelout to lead while he searched for his son, the hope and heir to the tribe, and the other boy, dark-skinned castaway his son called friend.

* * *

><p>When I ran from the Gronckle I tried to get back to either Gobber's forge or the Great Hall. The funny thing is though, when you try to go to two different places at once you more often than not end up at a completely different place, especially if you're being chased by a lava-ball spitting reptile.<p>

The dock houses weren't a terrible place to be at the moment, most of the dragon's had passed through the docks and were fighting the Vikings at the west side of the village for the flocks. The thing is though; the Gronckle had stopped chasing me 15 minutes ago. The reason I kept running was the shadow.

When I had passed a group of Vikings they had solved my Gronckle problem and had pointed me to the forge to get me away from anywhere near the fighting, only Odin knows why. As soon as I had left their company, I felt a chill on my neck and my instincts, honed by years of fleeing dragons told me that running would be in my best interests. So I started running, turning my head only for a second to see a pair of eyes, green like the flash at sunset, in the shadows as I ran.

I turned a corner and looked behind me, nothing but darkness. I had finally outrun whatever it was. Then I crashed into Driftwood.

We both fell to the floor, but while I slowly patted myself off, Drift scrambled to his feet.

"It's after me," He said, breathing quickly, his eyes wild with fear.

I grabbed his shoulder, "What's after you?"

He turned to me and looked me in the eye, "A shadow,"

My heart sunk, _another one, seriously?!_ I thought to myself. "Drift follow me and stay quiet," We stepped quietly through a burnt house, its wall collapsed from fire. The battle in the distance was only a dull thunder in the silence. I kept my arm on Driftwood, to make sure he didn't run, and partly to assure myself I wasn't alone.

The darkness enveloped us like a fog, only the firelight by the wall we came through lit the room. I heard Drift's ragged breathing. He cursed under his breath in English.

"[We're going to be all right, Drift don't worry]" I tried to reassure him.

A quiet growl sounded above us. Driftwood and I turned our heads slowly. Through the dull firelight, green eyes shone through a hole in the roof. We froze in place. I started to edge towards the door.

Then blood started to drip from the roof. It was blue.

A drop landed on Driftwood. His eyes, once fixed on the roof turned to the blue on his hands and he started to back away the way we came in. _Thor's hammer, Drift _Hiccup cursed to himself.

The firelight behind us spluttered, something stamping on the flames. I looked and froze. A single clawed foot, with skin like blackened bark stood on the flames, with green eyes floating above them.

Driftwood turned. He didn't make a sound when he saw the creature. He just stopped, I saw his legs start to falter.

The tip of its head came into the firelight, horns curved around its head like tusks. Drift's eyes widened, but once again he didn't move as if something held him in place.

That's when I threw my stick.

You see, since the dragon attack had happened before we could get to the forge. I had been holding this accursed sparring stick during my entire run through the village. For the last few minutes a plan had been forming in my head and I thanked Odin that I hadn't dropped it as I ran.

Naturally, the stick bounced off the dragon like a fly and landed in the pile of smoldering wood,

Just like I had intended.

You see one thing I know about fires is that when one dies down, all it takes to bring it back to life is a breath of fresh air. As soon as the pile of wood was knocked about the embers that had been starved of air returned to life like the fires of Muspelheim itself and enveloped the dragon's head.

Happy as I was that a plan of mine worked, I ignored that, and ran and grabbed Drift. Dragons were fireproof and all I had done was singe its eyes. Drift followed me out the door and into the front. No fires burned here. Unfortunately, a pair of green eyes did.

Something snapped in Drift at that moment, at least that's the only explanation I have that makes any sort of sense. He ran towards the eyes, screaming. The shadow met with a scream of its own. A scream that brings silence to a battlefield.

"_Nightfury"_

"HICCUP!" A gruff voice shouted, I immediately recognised as my Dad, but I ignored him. I had to stop Drift.

An explosion ripped through the air and threw Drift into me. All the air was forced out of my lungs in an instant and I lay sprawled against the floor, expecting death to take me any minute. My eyelids burned and I could feel the skin on my arms bleed from my fall. Then I heard the sound of two sets of flapping wings and a groan from Drift.

I would wager that under any other circumstances, I would have been pleased to know that two dragons had left me, when by rights they could have killed me. That my father had saved me from certain death and that my friend was alive and unhurt. But the thing is, I wasn't because I had just realised something.

"There's another Nightfury."

3. Unbelievable

Hiccup woke up the next morning with singed eyebrows and scabby arms. The morning light trickled through the window, the sound of the sheep herd and repairs to the village echoed along with it, along with less than pleasant chill that reminded Hiccup he was on the isle of Berk just after a dragon raid.

He lay in bed for a moment, confused as to how he came from being on the floor, the village burning all around him, to the relative comfort of his home. A pain snaked its way across his arms and down his back as he tried to get up, and he realized they were bandaged. A chilly breeze wafted through in and made the hairs on Hiccup's back stand on end; his shirt and coat lay at the foot of the bed, neatly folded, probably by Gothi he thought, he couldn't imagine his father or Gobber being the clothes-folding type.

He reached for his clothes and put them on, wincing as a line of pain snaked its way across his back again. _ I could just stay in bed, ignore all of this for a while longer. _ He dismissed the thought instantly when he remembered what happened last night.

Getting out of bed was difficult, his arms gave off a dull pain, but Hiccup was happily surprised to notice that his legs didn't seem to any worse off. He stretched his limbs, acclimatizing himself to the pain he knew would plague him for several weeks.

Hiccup put on his shoes and tried to step around the mess of scale models of prototype catapults and blueprints lying around the floor. On the right of his bed was his design desk, on it sat a mess of half-drawn sketches and blueprints . One of his shoes lay on top of his pencils and the other lay underneath the desk, acting as a paperweight to a stack of blank paper, he took them almost getting distracted by a model catapult before berating himself and walking downstairs.

Stoick the Vast was talking to Gobber. They stood by the fire; it flickered erratically until Hiccup poked it. The scent of burning wood filled the air and brought a warmth to Hiccup's lungs.

"Hiccup. Just hold on a second." He glanced towards Hiccup but quickly turned back to Gobber.

_Why yes dad I am alright, and thank you for asking. _Hiccup thought to himself. _But why __**would **__you ask? _He waited impatiently as his father spoke to Gobber in a low tone.

"Hiccup, I'm going on another expedition, I'll be back later this week. Probably,".

"And I'll be here, "

Stoick the Vast walked out of the house without so much as a hug or a wave, he picked his helmet off the cloak rack and left.

"I'm just fine by the way dad," Hiccup muttered to himself. _Just like every other time. _He was only a little surprised at this point, _he always has a reason to be away, whether it's a nest expedition, finding lost yaks or organizing repairs, Stoick the Vast never has any time for Hiccup the Useless._

Gobber watched the door shut behind him before scratching his head with his tong-hand and turning to Hiccup, "We have some big orders today Hiccup, half the villages' swords need sharpening and we need to make at least a dozen more door hinges,"

"_No need to worry Gobber, I'm absolutely fine, Thank you for asking,_" Hiccup said sarcastically.

Gobber just laughed. "I can see yur fine Hiccup, come on, Driftwood's already at tha forge,"

"Is he alright?"

"Drift? Yeh he whas fine, a bit burnt, like you but he looked more shocked than anything. He actually managed to get up this morning."

"What happened?"

"Yur dad said he found you and Driftwood unconscious by the docks, youwer pretty burnt and scratched but otherwise not to bad off,"

"What about the Nightfuries?"

"Don't tell me yu saw them too Hiccup!" he chuckled, "Aye, Drift told us about them nasty dragon's with bark-like skin and horns that curved 'round its face," He said almost sarcastically. "Like Nidhoggr itself was there,"

"They were really Nightfuries Gobber, we were right there!"

"Aye and so was yur father, he said that all he saw was an explosion as you were thrown off your feet, that could have just as easily been Zippleback gas,"

"Gobber I know what we saw, they were Nightfuries, I'm sure of it,"

"Oh aye, Hiccup believe ya, I bet this is just like that time with the Terrors,"

"Gobber, that time I had never seen a black Terror before, I know what we saw,"

"And how would'ya know whatta Nightfury looks like? Hmmm?"

"What else could it have been? nothing else makes that noise!" Hiccup practically shouted.

"What noise? Ach, you know what? Neveh mind. Now get to tha forge and start smithing, Drift's barely got the hang of it and I need ta help with the repairs, I half suspect by now he's wandered off to go fishing." Gobber snapped, he opened the front door and walked out leaving Hiccup alone with his thoughts.

* * *

><p>About 3 hours later Hiccup found him by the bay. Driftwood sat on the beach watching the waves while his fishing line sat in the sand. The wind was a light sea breeze and brought the fresh smell of the ocean. Gulls crowed noisily and the whirlpools at the far edge of the bay twisted like maelstroms,<p>

Hiccup climbed down the cliff-side, carefully avoiding the weak ledges and sharp rocks that jutted out like spikes. When he reached the bottom, Driftwood saw him and smiled. "Did Gobber send you?"

"Nah, I just thought that this is where you'd go if you didn't want to smith door hinges for the rest of the day." Hiccup smiled at him and sat down next to him, both of them covered bandages, they watched the bay. Driftwood had thrown off the prosthetic Hiccup made and lain it in the sand next to his rod and staff.

The bay was unnaturally warm for the isle of Berk, Hiccup guessed that was why Drift went here so often. He felt calm as viewed the scenery around him. Something in the water caught his eye, Hiccup watched the swirling mass of fins circle the surface of the water as if waiting for something to happen. They seemed to scramble over each other in a whirl of water; he sat fascinated and reached for his notebook.

"No point." Driftwood stopped him.

"Why?"

"They'll be done in a second,"

Hiccup watched as the splashing stopped and all the fins in the water disappeared into the water.

"What was that?"

"I would guess that one of the smaller sharks got injured,"

"You mean they ate him?" That

He shrugged at the question and threw a stone across the surface of the water. "You know they don't believe us," Drift said. He threw another stone, this time it just hit the water and sank.

"About the Nightfuries?" Hiccup asked.

"What else? I mean were they really Nightfuries?"

"They must be, nothing else makes that noise,"

"No Hiccup, I mean were ****both**** of them Nightfuries?"

"What?

"We only saw the one, the other stayed in the shadows the entire time, and it was the one **in the shadows** that blasted us before your dad arrived."

Hiccup thought about it, and noticed that what he said was right.

_The one in the shadow's had to have been a Nightfury, but the one we saw could have been anything. _

"Well we'll just have to prove it then, that there are two Nightfuries attacking Berk."

"And how are we going to do that, Hiccup Horrendous Haddock the third?"

"I don't know yet," Hiccup admitted. Then Hiccup turned to him and asked, "Why did you take off your prosthetic?"

"You know, the reason I have that prosthetic?"

"You lost them when fighting dragon's," Hiccup said carefully,

"You mean a Terrible terror had them for lunch," Driftwood smiled slightly as Hiccup grimaced, "The reason I have that prosthetic is that I was trying to protect my family. The fact of the matter is, I can't do that anymore,"

"Why not?" Hiccup said incredulously, "You and Astrid fought at least 15 Terror's if her estimates are accurate."

Driftwood paused and his eyes seemed to drift for a moment. Then he whispered something to him, "[I'm afraid of dragons]," He switched to English, Hiccup started to reply in Norse but changed my mind.

"[Even _I'm_ afraid of dragons Drift,]"

"[When I think of them Hiccup, I can't sleep and when I see them, I can't think or even breathe Hiccup. Tell me that's normal, and I'll get back and smith the entire villages door handles.]"

"[You mean hinges,]"

"[Whatever. Hiccup, I can't remember who my family is all I can remember is the English I'm speaking. If I can't even help the people who have taken me in, what good am I?]"

Hiccup paused for a moment. He tried to think of an appropriate response, something his like what his dad said to rally the Vikings, or Gobber when he led a charge against a dragon cluster, but nothing came to him. _Some leader I am_.

Frustrated, he got out his sketchbook and turned to the last page he had drawn on. In it was a picture of a horned head, with sharp-eyes and bark-like skin.

Hiccup showed it to Drift and saw his eyes widen, "[What do you

think? Does it look accurate?]"

Drift hesitated for a split second, "[Picture-Perfect,]" His eyes stayed glued to the drawing, as if unable to look away.

"[Everyone's afraid of something Drift, sometimes it's the dark, and other times it's dragons, it's an occupational hazard.]" He paused before continuing, "[Being an outsider is tough, Drift, I think we both know that, but you gave your hand to protect Astrid. I would say that's pretty helpful. Throwing away your prosthetic, that's not going to solve anything.]"

They sat in silence for a few minutes. The weight of the conversation pressed down on Hiccup like an anvil, but he waited to see his friend's response.

The gulls crowed and picked up whatever was left from the shark feeding frenzy before retreating to the safety of the cliff-side nests. The sea breeze soaked the two Vikings in a fine spray of saltwater and brought the smell of dead fish to their nostrils.

Finally, Driftwood sighed, "You're annoying you know that?" he switched back to Norse, then he jumped to his feet and shouted out to the sky, "I HATE THIS PLACE!,"

Hiccup smiled as Driftwood reached for his prosthetic and fumbled to put it on with only one hand. "And I hate this prosthetic, it's easier for me to throw a bola with no fingers than put this damn thing on,"

"Hold this and I'll put it on," Hiccup handed Drift his notebook and fastened his prosthetic for him.

"You really capture the dragon's features well," He was looking at the last page again, he seemed calmer but his eyes were still wide.

Something in my head clicked as he spoke. _Capture the dragon's features_. "Why didn't I think of that before?" Hiccup shouted. A design started to grow in his head as Hiccup pictured the motion of the dragon's flight, and the hours Hiccup spent carefully measuring the pulley on Drift's prosthetic. As his thoughts wandered they started to come together, years of observing dragons in flight started to coalesce into an underlying pattern that Hiccup could predict.

"What?" Driftwood turned to him.

"Both of us are useless at fighting dragons right?"

"I guess,"

"Or capturing them for that matter,"

"So?"

"I mean even you can barely throw a bola more than five feet,"

"Where are you going with this?" Driftwood said slightly annoyed.

"What if we madeâ€¦ something that could capture a dragon for us? A device that uses the trajectory of a dragon's flight to accurateâ€¦" He stopped when he saw the blank expression on Driftwood's face. "It will throw bola's at dragons. I even have a name already,"

"Hiccup, you are unbelievable, why in Thor's name would I say no to such a crazy idea?"

Hiccup grabbed Drift's staff and started scratching in the sand "I was hoping you would say that, Driftwood, meet_ The Mangler_,"

End
file.